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Some Unpublished Inscriptions from Mithila

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Mithila region occupied an important position in the socio-religious history of India through the ages. Nourished as it was by trade routes this land saw varied influences across the time. Traditionally Mithila region is surrounded by river Gandaka in the west, in south by great river Ganga, in east by river Kosi and in north by the mountain of great Himalayan range. Both Gautam Buddha and Mahavira are said to have spent some time in Mithila. The ancient Mithila covered in it present divisions of Purnea, Kosi, northern part of Munger and Bhagalpur, Darbhanga and Tirhut of Bihar and Terai area of Nepal. A fairly good number of inscribed materials in the form of stone sculptures, pillars, seals, sealings are found in the region. During the course of exploration various inscriptions has been found, among them some were still un-noticed and not properly studied.An attempt is made here to discuss these inscriptions and its details are given below.

1. Inscription on pillar, Pakauli, District Vaishali:

The village Pakauli in Gram Panchayat Rajasan, block Biddupur is situated 10 km south east of Hajipur on the old northern bank of river Gandak.The inscription is engraved on a sandstone pillar, octagonal in section kept in a small temple in the premises of Baba Siddhadham at the village. (Pl.12.1-2).The pillar is 178 cm high and the maximum thickness at the top is 27 cm.It slightly tapers with the lower facet of octagonal shaft measuring 14 cm and its upper facet 12.5 cm in width.Its lower part bears carving of a female(Yakshi) figure measuring 90cm × 20cm × 12cm with 7 cm high pedestal which is decorated with railing pattern. The inscription in Brahmi script of 1st century AD is found along the two continuous facets of pillar in two lines,which may be read as under:

Line-1 घव...मित्र..पुत्रदत्ते... (Ghava...mitra...putradatte...)

Line-2 ...अभिरमय... (... Abhiramaya...)

The pillar was first referred by H.Pandey in the year 1918-19 at the village Rajasan.[1] He has given only cursory description of it. According to

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him the pillar contains three inscriptions, of which the earliest dated to second century BC has the legend *abhirama* (a lady).[2] The second inscription is assigned to third century AD, but he does not give its reading.[3] The third inscription could not be deciphered.[4] Actually this pillar is kept at Pakauli village under Rajasan Gram Panchayat. Unfortunately no serious attempt has been made by scholars after H. Pandey.It is only one inscription written in two lines belonging to the first century AD, and unfortunately as the pillar is painted at present, all the letters are not visible and its entire content remains unknown.

2. Inscription on Buddha image, Korthu, District Darbhanga:

The village Korthu is situated 12 km south-west from block head quarter Ghanshyampur and 45 km south-east from district headquarter Darbhanga. A colossal and magnificent inscribed image of Buddha (size 89cm × 45cm × 9 cm) is noticed in the premises of Bhagvati temple in the village. It is carved in black stone and is in excellent state of preservation **(Pl. 12.3-4)**. Buddha is standing in *samapadasthanaka* pose on a lotus placed on *saptaratha* pedestal. His head and both hands are broken from the elbows.The diaphanous robe closely covers but reveals the well modeled body of the Buddha from the shoulders to the feet. Representations of Padmapani Avalokitesvara and Maitreya appear to his right and left respectively, both are standing in *tribhanga* on lotus pedestals. Maitreya is showing *abhaya mudra* by his right hand placed against the chest and holding a *nagakesara* flower by the stalk in his left hand.Avalokitesvara is holding a long stalk of lotus by his left hand while right hand displays the *varada* pose. Both are decked with *jatamukuta* and as usual ornaments.The back slab is richly carved with such motifs as the *gaja simha,* throne lintel terminating with yawning *makara* heads, *kinnara* musicians, flying *vidyadharas* bearing garland, stupas and floral scrolls.Upper part of the pointed backslab also showing a *chhatra* with fluttering ribbons above the head of Buddha. An inscription in one line in Sanskrit language and Nagari (Tirahuta) characters of about 10th century AD is inscribed on the central portion of its pedestal. The inscription reads as :

चेदी वं(शी)य कायस्थनादा श्री देहदल(स्य)
chedī vaṁśīya kāyastha nādā śrī dehadala[sya]

It seems to record that the image was the gift of Dehadala,leader of Kayastha community hailing from Chedi region.

This inscription is very important and it serves as an evidence to prove the cultural contact between Mithila region and Chedi region (a part of Madhya Pradesh).It also proves the influence of Kalachuri on north Bihar. Kalachuri of Tripuri also known as Kalachuri of Chedi, who ruled a part of central India during early medieval period are contemporary to Pala dynasty. Their core kingdom included the historical Chedi region and their capital located at Tripuri. Sarnath was also included in their kingdom for some time.[5] It also proves that few person of *kayastha* community had their faith in Buddhism. In the inscription donor describe himself as *Chedi vamshiya* which does not seems unusual. Like the members of other castes, the *kayasthas* were also often known after their native place.[6] Kalachuri king Karna led two expeditions, one against Pala king Nayapala and the other against the latter son Vigrahapala III.[7] He concluded a treaty with the Palas by giving his daughter Yauvanshri in marriage to Vigrahapala III. Another Kalachuri king Yashakarna led aggressive campaign against Champaranya[8] (modern Champaran region of north Bihar). A terracotta sealing with the legend of "chedi" in character of 12^{th} century AD was also found at Antichak (district Bhagalpur).[9] Thus the inscribed image from Korthu also serve a link between Chedi and Bihar region.

3. Inscription on Brahma image, Bhachchhi, District Darbhanga:

One notable inscribed image of Brahma(size 42cm × 20cm × 5cm) has been kept in a modern Siva temple in the village Bhachchhi, district Darbhanga (Pl.12.5-6). This village is situated in block Baheri, 25 km south-east from Darbhanga. In the sculpture Brahma is shown as four armed, three headed, potbellied, bearded, seated in *lalitasana* pose on a cushion. He is decked with armlets, *kada* and anklets. The *hamsa*, the vehicle of Brahma is shown seated just below the right leg of the god and a devotee is also depicted in *anjalimudra* and seated at the left corner of pedestal. He is holding *sruka* in upper right and rosary in lower right hand while *sruva* in upper left and *kamandalu* in lower left hand. The hair of Brahma has been arranged in *jatamukuta* and he is bedecked with armlets, anklets, *kangans* and *yajnopavita*. It is made of black basalt and assignable to 10th-11^{th} cen. AD. A one line inscription in Sanskrit language and Nagari (Tirahuta) Characters is also noticed at lower part of pedestal, which reads as below.

श्री श्री ...तीस ...श्री जगद्धरस्य (śrī śrī...tīsa...śrī jagaddharasya)

From the preserved portion of the inscription, it can be presumed that it praises the god Brahma as Jagat-dhara (the letter **n** is used in the inscription instead of **r**) i.e. sustainer of the world. Other details are lost.

4. Inscription on Vishnu image, Pipraulia, District Darbhanga:

Pipraulia is a small village in Hayaghat block in Darbhanga district. It is located 8km towards south from district head quarter Darbhanga. An interesting inscribed Vishnu image with other ancient stone sculptures kept in a modern Siva temple is found.In this specimen the four armed Vishnu is standing in *samapadasthanaka* pose, holding *gada* in upper right hand and lower right hand showing *varada* pose, *while his upper left hand holding chakra and conch in lower left,* and behind the palm a full blown lotus is depicted.He is decked with *kirita mukuta,yajnopavita*,long *vanamala* and other usual ornaments.Lakshmi with a flywhisk in right hand and a lotus in the other stands in *tribhanga* pose is depicts to the proper right of the main deity. Goddess Sarasvati is depicted to the left of the deity, holding a *vina* by her both hands. Both are standing in a decorated cushion.*Pancharatha* pedestal is carved with the kneeling devotees (Pl.12.7-8).

On the pedestal an inscription in two lines written in Sanskrit language and Nagari (Tirahuta) character of about10th century AD. is found, which reads as under:

Line-1 भटयान्य दुहीताय (Bhaṭayānya duhīt[r]āya)
Line-2 ससाधी जो (यो) धर्मकीर्ती (Sasādhī jo (yo) dharmakīrtī)

It records that the image (on which the inscription is engraved) is-donated by Sasadhi, daughter of Bhatayan for obtaining religious merit.

5. Inscription on a stone block, Kandaha, District Saharsa:

Kandaha is a small village situated about 12 km west of district head quarter Saharsa. It is famous for Sun temple which is situated on a mound in the village. The antiquity of the site was first noticed in 1934 by K.P. Jayaswal. It is believed that an ancient temple of the Sun god exists here which had under gone certain repairs in latter times; but the door frame of the original temple still survives in situ along with the enshrined image. Two vertical bars of door frame bears a Sanskrit inscription[10] which informs that the temple was erected by a Brahmin named *Vamsadhara* under orders of the king Narasimhadeva of the Kamesvara lineage (Oinawar dynasty) of Mithila. It is dated in the Saka era 1357 (1435 AD).Various architectural and sculptural fragments recovered from mound and nearby pond are kept in the premises of temple .A short epigraph in *mithilakshar* character of 15th century AD was noticed by the author on a stone block (Pl.12.9). It may read as

सिद्धम (expressed in symbol) प्र(झ)पदि र(ज)ऊ
(Siddham pra[jha] padi ra[ja]ū)
Most probably it was the name of mason.

6. Inscription on Buddha image, Chechar, District Vaishali:

The village Chechar is situated 20 km south-east to the district head quarter Vaishali in block Biddupur on Mahanar road.An inscribed Buddha image (115cm×64 cm) has been noticed in a modern temple complex situated at the bank of Ganga (Pl.12.10). The Buddha is represented sitting in the *bhumisparsha* pose on a double lotus pedestal. He wears the canonical robe which leaves the right shoulder and arm bare. The elongated earlobes bear slit marks, the face is oval and half closed eyes are suggestive of the contemplative mood. Short curls of hair closely cover the head and *ushnisha*. Apex of the back slab is oval and decorated with *bodhi* tree. The head of Buddha is encircled by an oval halo which is flanked by miniature stupa. The halo of the image contains the Buddhist creed engraved in a single line in Sanskrit language and Nagari (Tirahuta) characters of 9th century A.D., which read as under:

ये धर्म हेतु प्रभवा हेतु तेषां तथागतो ह्यवदत्तेषां च यो निरोध एवं वादी महाश्रमणः
(Ye dharma hetu prabhavā hetu teṣāṁ tathāgato hyavadatteṣāṁ ca yo nirodha evaṁ vādī mahāśramaṇaḥ).

The doctrine can be translated as following: Tathagata(i.e. Buddha) has revealed the cause of those phenomena which spring from a cause and also (the means of) their cessation. So says the Great Monk.

7. Inscription on Tara image, Dabhaihha, District Vaishali:

The village Dabhaichha is located 35 km north-east from Hazipur and 18 km east from Mahua town on Hazipur- Samastipur road. The village yielded an image of Tara (size 70cm×30cm×8cm) kept in a modern Siva temple.It is made of black basalt and is a notable art specimen of Pala art. It also (Pl.12.11) bears an inscription containing Buddhist creed (same as Chechar specimen) engraved on the upper part of back slab written in Sanskrit language and Nagari (Tirahuta) characters of about 10th century AD.

8. Inscription on Tara image, Jagatpur Baruari, District Supaul:

From the village Jagatpur Baruari[11] located in block Supaul in district Supaul an image of Tara (size 71cm×38cm×8cm) made of basalt is found.Presently it is displayed in Saharasa museum (acc.no.11304).Tara is

(Pl. 12.12) represented in standing pose on a lotus pedestal and carrying a *utpala* in her left hand while right hand displays *varada* pose. She is accompanied by *Asokanta* on her left and *Ekjata* on her right. A stupa is also depicted on right upper side of back slab. This form of Goddess Tara is known as *Khadiravani Tara*. This sculpture also bears Buddhist creed (same as Chechar specimen) on periphery of back slab engraved in Sanskrit language and Nagari (Tirahuta) characters of about 10th century AD.

9. Inscription on Manasa image, Bhairava Sthan, Muzaffarpur:

This inscribed sculpture of Goddess Manasa, (Pl. 12.13) made of black basalt found from Bhairava Sthan,Muzaffarpur and displayed in Rama Chandra Shahi Museum ,Muzaffarpur.In this specimen two armed Goddess is seated in *lalitasana* on a decorated cushion. She is decked with bejeweled diadem, necklace and other ornaments and decorated clothes. Over the head of Goddess a raised snake hood is shown. An oval shaped *tilak* appears on her forehead. She is holding a lotus bud or fruit in right hand with displaying *varada mudra* and a snake in her raised left hand. The pendant left foot of the goddess is resting on her *vahana hamsa*.Below the cushion a snake is shown with raised hood. On the right side of snake full blown lotus with stalk and a devotee with folded hands is shown.At the base of pedestal seven devotees in *anjali mudra* are also depicted. On the left side of goddess a seated male figure with folded hands is depicted. At upper right side of back slab a small two line inscription is found, which may be read as under:

Line-1 .. तथचार्य (tathacārya)

Line-2 सुत दिबाकर (Suta dibākara)

It seems that the image was the gift of Dibakar, son of Tathacharya .Inscription is in Sanskrit language and Gaudiya (Tirahuta) character of 15th century AD.

10. Three ancient Inscriptions on Asokan pillar, Kolhua, Muzaffarpur:

Asokan pillar at Kolhua is situated 65 km North-West of Patna in Muzaffarpur district. It is also called by Bakhra Pillar or Basarh Pillar by older scholars. The pillar is 11.08 m height from the present ground level. It is surmounted by lion capital with a square abacus.The whole surface of pillar is disfigured up to a height of 5 m with numerous rude scribbling by modern visitors most of which are either in English or in Devanagari but none apparently more than two or three hundred years old. It also bear a few letters of shell characters which have not been deciphered so far, nor

have they been dated with certainty. Three ancient single line inscriptions noticed by authors. Surprisingly these were not noticed as ancient epigraphs by earlier scholars. Most of scholars like M.H. Kuraishi[12]and B.P.Sinha[13] etc.have the view that this pillar has not any ancient inscription. The first inscription (Pl. 12.14) is read as श्री रण स्तं [भ] (śrī raṇa staṁ[bha]) in Sanskrit language and early Nagari characters of about 7th century AD.

The second inscription (Pl. 12.15) much worn out,three or four letters in the beginning is not identifiable .The remaining part of inscription reads श्री रण... (śrī raṇa), probably it also gives the name श्री रण स्तं[भ]. (śrī raṇa staṁ[bha]), in early Nagari characters of 7th century AD.

The third inscription (Pl. 12.16) crudely engraved in Sanskrit language and Brahmi characters of about 5th century AD.The third letter appears like धि, dhi but it the bulged part of ध(dha) should come to the left in the writing of fifth century AD,but it is to the right like in the character of Mauryan period.If such form of writing ध(dha) in fifth century AD can be taken as a exceptional case,then it can be read as य नि [धि].वी. (ya ni [dhi] vī).

According to Sanskrit English dictionary[14]*nidhi* is a place where anything is laid or deposited, a receptacle, a treasury, a granary, a nest etc.On the basis of context it may be interpreted as referring to receptacle, i.e., relic casket buried in the stupa? Inscription seems to be incomplete, only the word *nidhi* gives meaning.Interestingly, during the excavation of stupa, doubled walled square relic chamber was found in damaged condition.[15]

Thus above mentioned inscriptions have great archaeological and epigraphically importance and throw the light of socio-religious aspect of the Mithila region.

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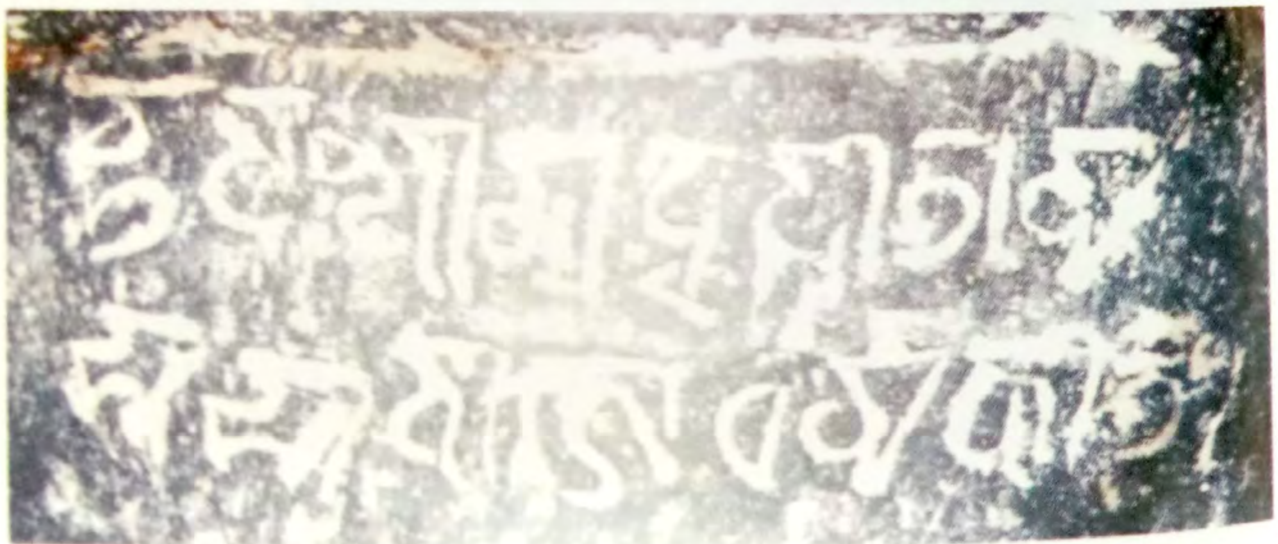






Pl.12.1-2. Inscribed pillar and close-up, Pakauli, Vaishali





Pl.12.7-8. Image of Vishnu and close-up of inscription, Piprauliya, Darbhanga





Pl.12.9. Inscription of Kandaha, Saharsa



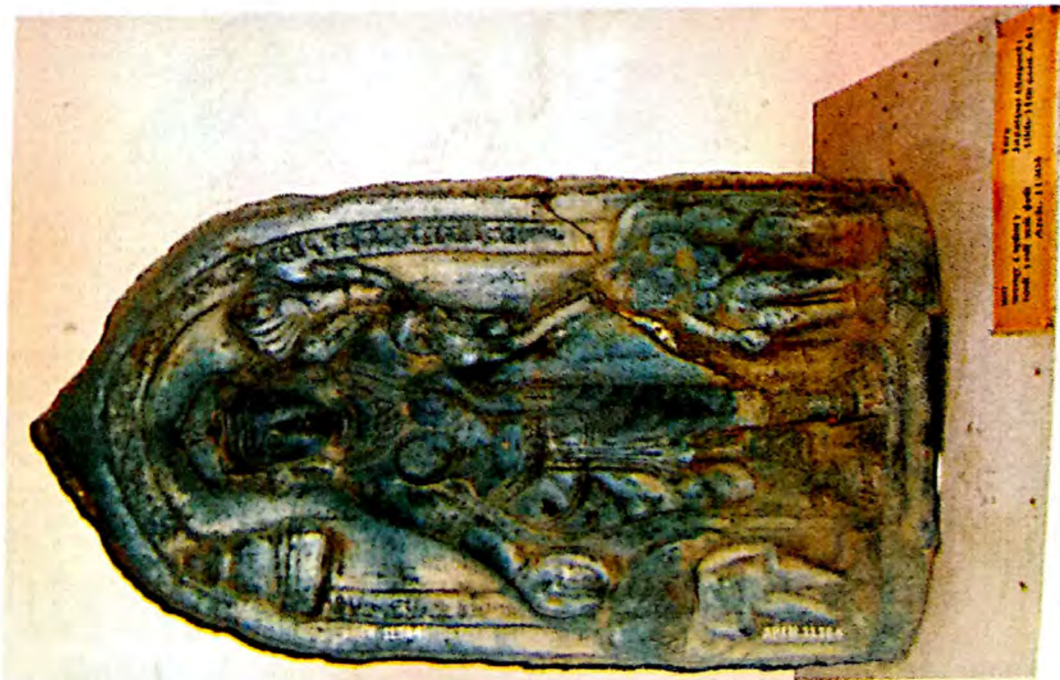


Pl.12.10. Image of Buddha, Chechar, Vaishali



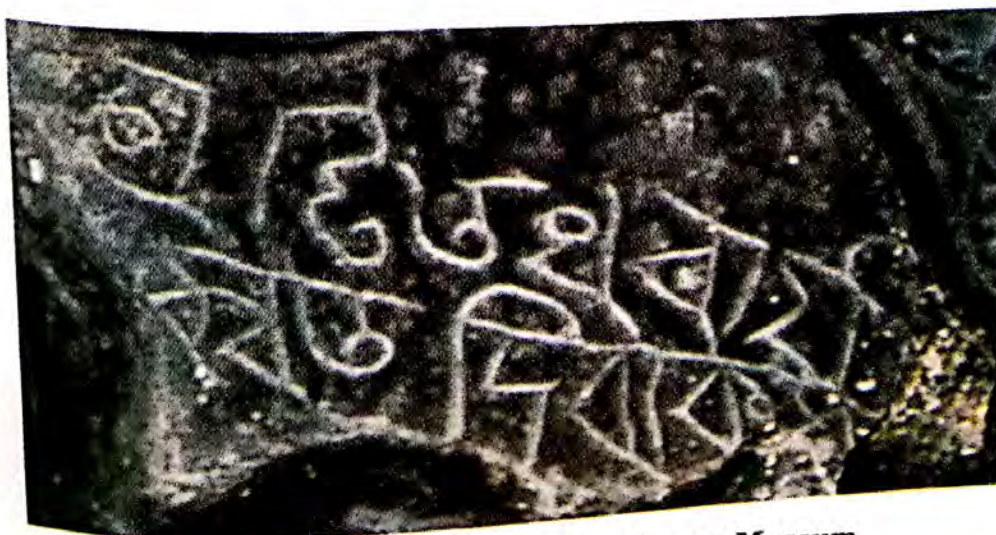


Pl.12.11. Image of Tara and close-up of inscription, Dabhaichh, Vaishali

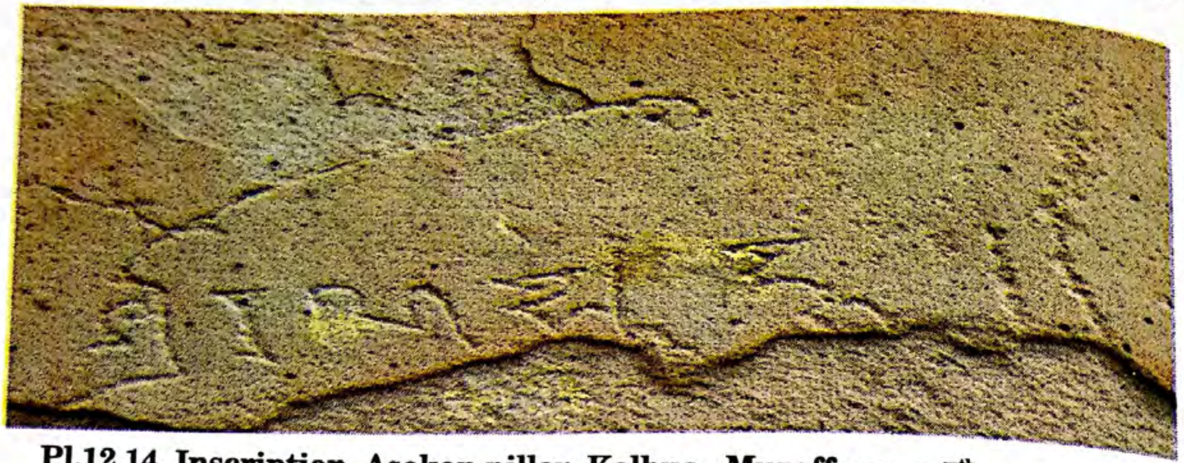


Pl.12.12. Image of Tara and close-up of inscription, Jagatpur, Baruari, Supaul





Pl.12.13. Image of Manasa, Muzaffarpur Museum



Pl.12.14. Inscription, Asokan pillar, Kolhua , Muzaffarpur, 7th century AD



Pl.12.15.Inscription, Asokan pillar, Kolhua, Muzaffarpur, 7th century AD



Pl.12.16.Inscription, Asokan pillar, Kolhua, Muzaffarpur, 5th century AD